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The early use of radio for political communication in Australia and Canada: John Henry Austral, Mr Sage and the Man from Mars

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The comparative study of electioneering is an emerging field. One of its driving concerns has been to chart the "Americanisation" or convergence of campaigning methods employed in very different settings. Sometimes the assumption is made that this convergence began with the recognition – first in the USA – that winning elections demands the skilful use of television. A comparison of the early use of radio in election campaigns in Australia and Canada demonstrates that the "Americanisation" of campaigning pre-dates the advent of television. There are clearly gaps in what is known about the early use of the wireless for political broadcasting in Australia. However in 1923-24 E.R. Voigt visited the US and, on his return, urged the NSW Trades Hall to establish 2KY for propaganda purposes. In the 1930s the NSW Labor leader Jack Lang was quick to adopt the "fire-side chat" formula devised for Franklin Roosevelt. In the 1940s R.G. Menzies, the founder of the Liberal Party, also came to see radio as a powerful weapon after observing its political use in USA. Not surprisingly the 1949 Liberal campaign which returned Menzies to power made extensive use of radio. It is often remembered for its "John Henry Austral" radio ads which are claimed as a breakthrough, but which appear to imitate earlier US and Canadian election campaigns – notably the Canadian Tories "Mr Sage" broadcasts of 1935.

The comparative study of electioneering is an emerging field in the study of political communication.[1] One of its driving concerns has been to chart the increasing similarity of electioneering methods used in diverse political settings. Despite "great differences in the political cultures, histories, and institutions of countries", comparative research points to the recent and increasing use of common electioneering practices such as the employment of media professionals, reliance on political advertising and the carefully calculated use of television.[2] This convergence of electioneering practice has been dubbed the "Americanisation" of

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[1] For example see M. Gurevitch and J.G. Blumler, "Comparative research: the extending frontier" in D.L. Swanson and D. Nimmo, *New Directions in Political Communication Research* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1990); D. Butler and A. Ranney, eds., *Electioneering. A Comparative Study of Continuity and Change* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); S. Bowler and D.M. Farrell, eds., *Electoral Strategies and Political Marketing* (New York: St Martins Press, 1992); and D.L. Swanson and P. Mancini, eds., *Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy* (Westport: Praeger, 1996).

[2] P. Mancini and D.L. Swanson, "Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy: Introduction" in Swanson and Mancini, *ibid.*, p. 2.

campaigning and is invariably seen as a relatively recent trend.[3] Americanisation essentially refers to the use of commercial marketing methods to "sell" candidates — a process most pronounced in the USA where a "corps of campaign consultants, pollsters and media advisers"[4] have turned campaigning into an industry. It also refers to ways in which television has transformed politics — again a phenomenon most pronounced in US elections and imitated in countries such as Australia.

Campaign practices may well be "changing rapidly in many democracies" and as a result converging (as Mancini and Swanson insist).[5] But in fact there is little new in the application of commercial marketing methods to "sell" politicians to voters — nor in the imitation of electioneering methods proven successful elsewhere. Both trends clearly predate the emergence of television, a point often overlooked in accounts of the Americanisation of electioneering which emphasise "video politics" and the central importance of television. This paper examines the early use of radio (or the wireless) in election campaigns in Canada and Australia to demonstrate that the borrowing of campaign methods from the world of commerce and from election campaigns successfully fought elsewhere has a considerable history. Looking at the early use of radio provides a valuable historical perspective. As Mickelson has argued with the USA in mind, if electioneering has been transformed by television in particular, and by other communication technologies as well, then this is best seen from an historical vantage point.[6] Of course, Canada and Australia have similar parliamentary and federal systems of government and are well-suited to comparative analysis.[7] But more than this, there are some curious parallels in the early political use to which radio was put in Canada and Australia and, in Australia's 1942 *Broadcasting Act*,

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[3] Holtz-Bacha and Kaid write "It has often been argued that we observe a process of Americanisation in the way election campaigns are conducted in Western democracies" and then identify the central characteristics of American campaigning as the priority given to television; the personalisation of politics and importance attached to images ahead of issues; and the use of professionally devised media strategies. See C. Holtz-Bacha and L.L. Kaid, "A comparative perspective on political advertising', in Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, *Political Advertising in Western Democracies* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1995), pp. 8-9. For a further discussion of the concept see W. Field, "On the Americanisation of electioneering", *Electoral Studies* Vol. 13 (1), 1994, pp. 58-63.

[4] D. Kavanagh, *Election Campaigning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995). p. 10.

[5] Mancini and Swanson, "Politics, media, and modern democracy", pp. 2-3.

[6] S. Mickelson, *From Whistle Stop to Sound Bite. Four Decades of Politics and Television* (New York: Praeger, 1989), pp. 5-6. In similar vein Richard Rose argues that changes in campaign techniques need be understood against the "way in which campaigns were formerly conducted". Stempel also underlines the importance of looking at the evolution of electioneering historically. If contemporary political communication bears little resemblance to early forms of canvassing nonetheless "it is important to look at what it was then and trace the progression". See R. Rose, *Influencing Voters. A Study of Campaign Rationality* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 14; and G. Stempel, "The evolution of political communication" in Stempel, ed., *The Practice of Political Communication* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), p. 3.

[7] See R. Jackson "Australian and Canadian comparative political research" in M. Alexander and B. Galligan, eds *Comparative Political Studies. Australia and Canada* (Melbourne: Pitman, 1992), p. 14.

even a direct debt to earlier Canadian legislation circumscribing the use of radio for electioneering purposes.

John Henry Austral

Much less is known about the use of the wireless for electioneering in Australia than is the case in Canada where this subject has been more extensively studied. In Australia's case the best documented instance of the early political use of radio is the campaign which brought R.G. Menzies' Liberal Party to power in 1949. Hughes describes this as a *tour de force* in which the Liberals, guided by their advertising agent Sim Rubensohn and generously funded by Australian and London business interests who were anxious to rid themselves of a socialist Labor government, "broke new ground". The Liberal campaign "made good use of radio, the only electronic medium then available, through saturation of time and imaginative dramatisation of political material".[8] In similar vein Mills describes this 1949 campaign as "extraordinary" because of the Liberals' pioneering use of broadcast advertising. In fact Mills sees it as an early prototype of the modern campaign whose hallmark is "a centralised and disciplined campaign of long-term electronic advertising".[9] Braund also considers that the Liberals' "highly innovative" 1949 campaign "marked a watershed in Australian political history" because it was the first which employed a "prolonged, pervasive psychological campaign via an electronic medium". She emphasises that in 1949, for the first time, the Liberals opted to "make their main thrust for the campaign through radio".[10]

In 1949 there was nothing especially novel about the purchase of radio time for the purpose of political communication — McNair records that this practice was well established by 1935. Rather than the novelty of bought air-time, it is the nature (and sheer scale) of the Liberals' 1949 radio advertising campaign which allows it to be described as a break through. The centrepiece of the advertising campaign devised by the Liberals' advertising agency, Hansen-Rubensohn, was a series of 15-minute dramatised radio programs featuring the fictional character "John Henry Austral". Between April 1947 and December 1948 John Henry spoke to voters twice-weekly on more than 80 commercial stations around Australia. In all there were some 200 episodes spanning a 20 month season prior to the election. The Liberals budgeted £2300 per month for their production and airtime (and another £900 to advertise their broadcast times in the press) which helps explain why their 1949 campaign to unseat the Chifley Labor government remains one of the most expensive ever fought in Australia.[11]

Mills describes the John Henry Austral campaign as "part satire, part serial,

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[8] C.A. Hughes, "Australia and New Zealand" in Butler and Ranney, *Electioneering*, pp. 92-93.

[9] S. Mills, *The New Machine Men* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1986), p. 87.

[10] V. Braund, "Themes in Political Advertising: Australian Federal Election Campaigns 1949-1972", (unpublished MA thesis), University of Sydney, (1978), pp. 2 and 12.

[11] W.A. McNair, *Radio Advertising in Australia* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1937), pp. 148 and 91. McNair was a director of the J. Walter Thompson Australia Pty Ltd agency.

[and] part soapbox".[12] Each studio-recorded John Henry Austral advertisement resembled an episode of a radio play (with John Henry the "honey-voiced host"). The campaign lampooned Chifley and the Labor government "with good humoured ruthlessness". Braund records that the Austral episodes did not overtly publicise Liberal policy, but took a more subtle and "deliberatively emotive" approach. Each carefully scripted episode explored an everyday topic "to draw out some broader political moral". For example individual episodes dealt with the complaints of women about the time wasted waiting in queues to shop for still-rationed food, or with the problems ordinary families faced in saving for and building a simple home. At every opportunity John Henry would castigate Labor's bureaucratic and socialistic policies, and reveal the hidden influence of communism. As Braund notes, the Austral series was intended to play upon what was seen to be the pervasive fear of the threats posed to Australian society by communism.[13]

Austral's creator, Sim Rubensohn, considered that print media were better able to carry policy detail and that, as a medium, radio was best suited to "mood setting".[14] Accordingly, the Austral broadcasts were "not Party political statements as previously understood, with an identified Party officeholder outlining specific Party promises to address specific complaints". Indeed John Henry's part was written as that of a neighbourly, wise and "independent commentator whose Liberal sympathies sprang less from partisanship than from nationalism and a common-sense rejection of the amorphous and emotional horrors Labor was inflicting".[15] As well as the Austral series, the Liberals also sponsored another long running radio program using a quiz show format, although this was broadcast only in rural areas. The "correct" answers may have suggested the wisdom of Liberal policy and philosophy but this quiz format also circumvented the traditional party political broadcast. One of the planks upon which the argument that the Liberals' use of radio for electioneering in 1948-49 broke new ground is that their use of the medium extended beyond the broadcasting of policy speeches.

Looking back from an era in which campaign strategists favour 30, even 15-second "spot" TV ads, the idea of building a campaign around an extended series of 15 minute radio dramatisations seems rather quaint. In fact the John Henry Austral ads were a clever adaptation of a then-current cultural form of the radio serial (just as televised political spot ads use the now-familiar methods and form of product commercials). In the 1930s and 1940s radio was ingrained in everyday Australian life as an important source of entertainment as well as news. Dramatised radio serials such as *One Man's Family*, *Tarzan* and *Dad and Dave* (which began in 1937 and ran for 2000 episodes) were extraordinarily popular with listeners and advertisers alike. Some ran for longer, but contemporary thinking within the advertising industry was that episodes of "ten, twelve or fifteen

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[12] Mills, *New Machine Men*, p. 90.

[13] Braund, "Themes in Political Advertising", pp. 7, 8, and 10.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Mills, *New Machine Men*, p. 91.

minutes" were ideal because they were long enough "to develop interest" but not long enough to become monotonous.[16] As Mills notes, Rubensohn and his colleagues borrowed the idea for John Henry Austral "from the popular form of the radio play".[17] But it is also true that the Austral series represented the application of a familiar commercial advertising technique. Writing in 1937 McNair observed that "dramatisation is a particularly useful device for overcoming distracting influences in the presentation of direct or 'spot' announcements". Advertisers of the time saw this technique as a means of "giving 'life' to a commercial message, and maintaining a steady level of attention while it is delivered".[18] Thus in devising the dramatised series to promote the Liberals' cause, Rubensohn simply turned an established and familiar format into a vehicle for political communication.

The particular idea of building the series around a sage, fictional character willing to proffer seemingly impartial political advice to listeners also has its antecedents. For example readers of the popular *Australasian Post* magazine would have been familiar with a "Bob Freeland" — another fictional character with a name which is a clever pun. Bob Freeland appeared regularly in full-page ads placed in the pages of the *Post* offering various homilies about the importance of democracy, free enterprise and the "Australian Way" These ads were part of the banks' 1947-48 campaign against bank nationalisation. The banks were also major supporters of the Liberal election campaign and Rubensohn would certainly have been aware of their Bob Freeland advertising. It is possible that Rubensohn was also inspired to create John Henry Austral by a series of pre-second world war Canadian Conservative party election broadcasts which also used dramatisation and a knowledgable, wise, fictional character to host each episode. Mills makes this very point. He observes that the 1949 Liberal advertising had an "uncannily close precedent" in the dramatised political ads broadcast by R.B Bennett's Conservative Party during the 1935 Canadian federal campaign. Mills, however, appears to think this is not a case of plagiarism, and that it is only "by chance" that the Tories' Mr Sage character closely resembles John Henry Austral.[19]

Plagiarism? Mr Sage and Calwell's 1942 *Broadcasting Act*

Like John Henry, Mr Sage was a knowing, neighbourly, and entirely fictitious character who featured in a series of radio programs specifically created to promote the electoral chances of a political party. Just as in the Austral series, in the Canadian Mr Sage episodes actors impersonated leading Canadian political figures including the prime minister, Mackenzie King. Certainly the Mr Sage series was much shorter. It included just six (but for the first) half-hour weekly broadcasts all run on the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission national network toward the end of, not before, the campaign proper. But it did — like the later John Henry

[16] See McNair, *Radio Advertising in Australia*, p. 233.
[17] Mills, *New Machine Men*, p. 90.
[18] See his *Radio Advertising in Australia*, p. 199.
[19] Mills, *New Machine Men*, p. 180n.

Austral series — exploit the radio serial format for election propaganda purposes. Like John Henry, Mr Sage bore the stamp of a commercial advertising agency — in this case the Toronto firm J.J. Gibbons. As Rubensohn's Austral campaign did, the Mr Sage episodes also eschewed the traditional political speech as a vehicle for political communication. The Mr Sage series was also professionally scripted and put together sparing no money and using leading actors of the time. Like the Australian Liberal advertising of 1948-49, the broadcast of each episode of the Mr Sage series was itself advertised in the print media (with ads which painted Sage — like Austral — as a neighbourly but knowledgeable and shrewd observer of politics able to see through sham and pretence.)

Just as the John Henry Austral campaign has been portrayed as highly innovative, a number of Canadian scholars have also identified the Mr Sage series as a break through in the use of radio for electioneering. According to Axworthy, the 1935 Tory campaign "innovated in the area of political broadcasts by purchasing several ten-minute programs featuring the dramatisation of a cracker barrel philosopher called 'Mr Sage' who had several unkind things to say about [the Liberal PM] Mackenzie King". In similar vein Levine writes that "it was six dramatised Conservative broadcasts ... near the end of the campaign that were most unique to the 1935 election". Equally Nolan has argued that the Tory campaign "in the fall of 1935 introduced political soap opera to Canadian radio in the form of 'Mr. Sage'".[20] In fact Mr Sage appears not to have been an entirely original, innovative contribution to campaigning. To begin with, as early as 1928 in the USA the "Democrats used radio to deliver an 'all-star dramatisation' of nominee Al Smith's life".[21] The idea of turning the radio serial format into campaign propaganda can also be traced to the 1934 gubernatorial campaign in California when his opponents used a popular serial format to combat the socialist reformer Upton Sinclair. One dramatisation introduced "Weary and Willie" — "two hoboes who were travelling across the country to California where they would sponge off Sinclair's tax-funded welfare programs".[22] Another featured a middle-class family "The Benetts" who discussed the possible impact of an adverse election outcome on their lives.

Even in the context of Canadian politics Mr Sage was not a first. For in Canada this style of radio advertising can be traced to the Social Credit campaign fought in Alberta in 1934-5 which swept William Aberhart to office. During the campaign proper in 1935 the Albertan Social Credit campaign incorporated a series of "dramatised programs featuring 'Mr Orthodox Anonymous'".[23] This series was

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[20] T.H. Axworthy, "Capital Intensive Politics" (unpublished research paper, 1991), p. 53; A. Levine, *Scrum Wars* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1993), pp. 172-3; and M. Nolan, "Canadian Election Broadcasting: Political Practices and Radio Regulation 1919-1939", *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 29, 2 (1985): 182.

[21] P. Seib, *Campaigns and Conscience* (Westport: Praeger, 1994), p. 96.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[23] F.C. Engelman and M.A. Schwarz, *Canadian Political Parties: Origin, Character, Impact* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1975), p. 136.

preceded by another which ran between October 1934 and February 1935. It took the form of a weekly radio series in which an actor played a "Man from Mars" who discussed the province's economic plight with "typical Albertans" and then puzzled as to why earthmen were not sufficiently smart to see that Social Credit held the solutions to their predicament.[24]

The very speed with which Canadian parties in 1935, first in Alberta and then in federal politics, borrowed from the 1934 Californian election by using the radio serial format as a vehicle for election propaganda poses something of a puzzle about the early political use of radio in Australia. If, as it has been argued, the 1949 Austral dramatised series was a highly innovative, then why was this particular style of political communication so slow to reach Australia? Possibly part of the answer may be bound up in the Mr Sage story itself. For R.B. Bennett and his Conservative Party lost the 1935 election. In 1936, piqued by the Mr Sage broadcasts which Mackenzie King considered scurrilous and libellous, and angry that the Conservatives had failed to identify themselves as Mr Sage's sponsor, King's victorious Liberal government legislated to proscribe dramatised political broadcasts. Via this route Mr Sage ultimately left his mark on Australian politics. For according to the media historian Ken Inglis, this 1936 Canadian broadcasting legislation served as the immediate model for broadcasting legislation introduced in Australia in 1942 by Arthur Calwell.

Calwell's 1942 *Broadcasting Act* placed quite explicit restrictions on electoral broadcasts: "their sponsors were to be named, they were not to be in dramatic form, and they had to stop two clear days before an election. The whole clause was copied from the *Canadian Broadcasting Act* of 1936, into which it had been written after a shadowy character named 'Mr Sage' was heard in party political sketches on radio during the election campaign of 1935".[25] It is conceivable that, as it was intended to do, this 1942 legislation placed something of a brake upon the use of dramatised radio serials as a form of political communication in Australia.[26] Yet the 1942 Act did not prevent broadcast of the John Henry Austral series. Indeed, stung by the impersonation of ministers in the early Austral episodes broadcast in 1948, the Chifley government promptly amended the *Broadcast Act* to further tighten the prohibition on the dramatisation of current political matters. This tightening, it has been argued, explains why campaigns in Australia returned to a more conventional form during the 1950s.

If, as Inglis rightly points out, Calwell's original 1942 *Broadcasting Act* expressly borrowed from section 22 of the 1936 *Canadian Act*, then it follows that

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[24] Levine, *Scrum Wars*, p. 173n.

[25] K. Inglis, *This is the ABC* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), pp. 106-7.

[26] In the case of Canada, Nolan argues that these regulations "effectively stymied innovation in the political use of the electronic media for the next two decades. Politicians, their media advisers, and broadcasters had to follow rigid formats". But this may not be strictly true. Section 22 of the *Canadian Broadcasting Act* when transplanted to Australia did not prevent the 1949 Austral campaign because the ban on political dramatisation applied only after the issue of election writs. See Nolan, "Canadian Election Broadcasting", p. 178.

the Mr Sage campaign which prompted Mackenzie King to legislate against political dramatisation must have been common knowledge in Australian political circles.[27] Again this invites the question of why it was that Australian campaign strategists were seemingly tardy to experiment with this particular form of election propaganda. In answer it might also be argued that the anti-Labor side of politics in Australia was in disarray for the best part of a decade from the late 1930s onward. The internal bickering within the United Australia Party (which prompted Menzies to resign the prime ministership in August 1941) finally caused it to disintegrate after the 1943 election. Its successor — the Liberal Party formed by Menzies in late 1944 toward the end of the second world war — took some further time to take root. This upheaval is likely to have deterred investment in new forms of campaigning on the anti-Labor side of politics. For that matter, it also created an electoral climate which gave Labor in the 1940s[28] grounds for optimism, and therefore no particular incentive to explore new campaign methods. In short it is plausible to argue that political circumstances in Australia during the late 1930s and 1940s might explain any tardiness in the innovative use of radio (exemplified in the John Henry Austral series). Nonetheless, it may be that the underlying premise is flawed and that those who depict the 1949 Liberal advertising campaign as innovative are simply wrong to do so.

There are several clues which suggest that the Rubensohn's 1949 John Henry Austral radio campaign was not, in fact, the first to use dramatisation to carry an election message to Australian voters. Armstrong considers that the prohibition on political dramatisation in Calwell's 1942 Act was prompted by offence taken to a wartime anti-Labor 1940 radio ad in which an actor with a German accent (who was taken to be Adolf Hitler) urged Australian voters to assist his cause by voting for the ALP.[29] Armstrong's source is the 1942 Gibson Committee report on wireless broadcasting which refers to "the growth of dramatised broadcasting in recent years and the bitter protests it has evoked", and to the particular controversy surrounding the 1940 federal election in which popular protest prompted some station managers to refuse to broadcast the ads using "simulated German voices".[30] Equally in W.A. McNair's 1937 text there is a passage which suggests that John Henry Austral's roots probably go back to the 1930s when Rubensohn then worked for the NSW ALP.

In noting that political parties booked air time during the 1934 federal and 1935 NSW elections, McNair adds (without elaborating) that "The New South Wales

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[27] The 1941 report of the Joint Committee on Wireless Broadcasting (which recommended the controls on political broadcasting which the 1942 *Broadcasting Act* puts in place) is quite explicit. It reads we examined the *Canadian Broadcasting Act* (1936), p. 40 and urges "adoption of the Canadian practice", p. 60. See Australia, Parliament, "Report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Wireless Broadcasting", *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers* 1942, no. 73.

[28] During the 1930s Labor itself had been in a state of disarray in the wake of the 1931 split, so much so that Jaensch sees the UAP winning the 1934, 1937 and even the 1940 elections "virtually by default". See D. Jaensch, *The Liberals* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994), p. 28.

[29] M. Armstrong, *Broadcasting Law and Policy in Australia* (Sydney: Butterworths, 1982), p. 552.

[30] Joint Parliamentary Committee on Wireless Broadcasting, pp. 59-60.

Labour Party sponsored an innovation in the form of a series of plays, dramatising the emotional background of the Labour appeal".[31] McNair refers to "plays" which allows that these political dramatisations may have used the extended radio serial format Rubensohn employed in the much later Austral series. It would appear that, after all, Australian campaign strategists were in tune with trends in the use of radio in north American elections in the mid-1930s,[32] and that it was the scale and expense of the much later Austral series rather than its use of radio dramatisation to disseminate election propaganda which was pioneering. Nevertheless, all the evidence is not in. Remarkably little has been written about the early use of radio for electioneering in Australia. It is here where comparison with Canadian experience may suggest several lines of inquiry.

The early use of radio in Canadian politics

Much more has been written about the use of radio to fight Canadian elections in the 1920s and 1930s. In this literature there are several lessons which may also hold for Australia. Axworthy has observed that "Politicians go where the voters are" and that "In 1920 a new venue for political communication became possible — the living room".[33] Nevertheless, the Canadian experience suggests that this is not strictly true. Radio was not born a fully fledged medium of mass communication. Although it took root quickly, by 1930 only "one-third of all Canadian homes had some sort of radio receiving device".[34] During the 1920s the technology of radio was limited. The first radio sets were primitive even by the standards of those available in the 1930s which were "equipped with the screen-grid, four-element vacuum tube" and able to be precisely tuned. Equally, the first microphones and studio facilities were limited. Politicians such as Mackenzie King who experimented with radio during the 1920s necessarily had to do so live-to-air because their speeches could not be recorded.

Furthermore in its first years radio was essentially a local, or at best, regional medium. The development of a national radio network was a considerable technical feat and not quickly accomplished. Thus the network of 23 stations assembled to carry a broadcast from Parliament Hill to mark the sixtieth anniversary of Confederation in 1927 required "a remarkable engineering feat involving some 419,000 miles of telephone and telegraph lines".[35] With the broadcasting range of the most powerful transmitter reaching 1,900 kilometres, to begin with radio was necessarily a local medium. Not surprisingly radio first

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[31] McNair, *Radio Advertising*, p. 148.

[32] A careful reading of McNair's 1937 text shows that the Australian radio industry in the 1930s kept a watchful eye on broadcasting in the USA. McNair himself acknowledges what is "regularly done" in American programs, and notes that leading figures such as the manager of 2GB, A.E. Bennett, visited the USA in order gather "general ideas for developing programs". See McNair *ibid.*, pp. 236-7 and 323.

[33] Axworthy, "Capital Intensive Politics", p. 51.

[34] W. Soderlund *et al*, "From a Single Medium to a Multimedia Society" in R.K. Carty ed., *Canadian Political Party Systems: A Reader* (Peterborough: Dundurn Press, 1992), p. 271.

[35] Nolan, "Canadian election Broadcasting", p. 178.

surfaced as a political force in regional-level Canadian politics. It was probably no accident that in 1935 the Tories filched the idea for Mr Sage from Albertan politics. In that province the Social Credit leader William ("Bible Bill") Aberhart, a former radio preacher with a masterly way with the microphone and a large listening audience on the Prairies, had pioneered the political use of radio in 1932. Radio was initially a local medium and first put to political use by regionally based politicians[36] — such as Aberhart who was "quick to realise radio's capacity for vivid communication".[37]

A further Canadian lesson is that federal politicians were hesitant, even reluctant to appreciate the potential of radio as a unique vehicle for political communication. In contrast to the USA where radio was quickly adapted to campaigning, "in Canada things moved at a slower, less exciting pace":[38] "there was no stampede to politicise the microphones".[39] Michael Nolan offers several reasons for this. First "the attitude of politicians towards radio was conditioned both by the state of broadcasting technology and the local nature of the medium". Furthermore during the 1920s the federal leaders of Canadian political parties preferred to cling to traditional campaign methods. They "seemed to be most comfortable addressing public meetings" and treated radio merely as a means of broadening the audience who could listen to their speeches. They were slow to understand that traditional oratory was far less suited to radio than the conversational approach adopted by the US president Roosevelt in his "fire-side chats". Even when the Liberals and Tories turned to radio in the 1930 federal campaign as a "principal technique" for wooing voters, R.B. Bennett and Mackenzie King each stuck to making traditional speeches which were broadcast live.[40]

The advent of wireless and Australian politics

Radio broadcasting officially commenced in Australia in September 1923. Although it sits rather uncomfortably with the claim that the 1949 Liberal campaign was highly innovative in its use of radio, it is sometimes argued that Australian politicians demonstrated an "eagerness to exploit the medium of wireless".[41] But perhaps this needs be read against the lessons which can be taken from Canadian experience. In Australia too the wireless was not born a fully developed medium. In July 1924 there were 1206 licenses in force, and by the end of that year, 38,336. By 1932 370,000 licenses had been issued. By the end of the

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[36] By the early 1930s some back benchers from the West were urging their parties to take advantage of "the new opportunities the medium offered. In 1933 ... Frank Turnbull, a Western Conservative Member of Parliament, urged Prime Minister R.B. Bennett to make better use of the medium ... [saying] 'The radio is a powerful avenue of publicity. The CCF use the radio in Regina fifteen minutes once a week. So do the Liberals. The Conservative voice is silent'". See Nolan, *ibid.*, p. 181.

[37] Engelman and Schwarz, *Canadian Political Parties*, p. 136.

[38] Levine, *Scrum Wars*, p. 169.

[39] Soderlund, "From a Single Medium", p. 272.

[40] Nolan, "Canadian Election Broadcasting", pp. 177-9.

[41] L. Johnson, *The Unseen Voice* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 192.

decade more than 60 percent, and by 1942 77 percent, of Australian homes had radios.[42] As they were later to do with TV, Australians quickly took radio to heart. But there was a period in the 1920s and 1930s when the medium had an uncertain future and limited audience, and thus limited utility as a campaign tool other than at a regional level.

Nonetheless, Hughes considers that just eight years after the official launch of wireless broadcasting in Australia "radio made its debut as a major force in the 1931 campaign".[43] Thomas agrees that in this campaign "federal politicians ... used radio extensively for electioneering purposes".[44] It is important to note the way in which radio was first used. Sawer says of this federal election in which wireless "came into its own" that "Scullin broadcast his policy speech first, and then delivered it to a live audience, Lyon's speech from Sydney Town Hall was simultaneously broadcast, and Page relied entirely on broadcasting for his main speech".[45] Like their Canadian counterparts in 1930, Scullin, Lyons and Page each used radio in 1931 in an effort to reach an audience beyond the town hall for their opening campaign speeches.

In this way, this first use of wireless in Australian federal politics simply extended the early practice (established in 1901) of launching the campaign with a policy speech. Hughes writes "Live radio carried it immediately and at peak listening time to a large part of the electorate". Thereafter the campaign proceeded without radio as business as usual, "with innumerable meetings on street corners and in halls large and small, addressed by party leaders, by visiting MPs, and by local candidates and party officers".[46] On close inspection Johnson's claim that Australian politicians eagerly exploited radio in its very early years also suggests that they did so chiefly to transmit speeches made in a traditional manner to an audience beyond the town hall. She argues that during the 1920s, when stations relied heavily on outside broadcasts to fill their schedules, they would obligingly broadcast politicians' "speeches at any public occasion".[47]

In Australia as in Canada in the 1920s and early 1930s, federal politicians mostly clung to traditional forms of oratory and treated radio as an "extension of the platform" or an incidental means of enlarging the audience for their campaign speeches. But as Johnson points out "listeners did not always respond favourably to this use of broadcasting by politicians", and radio magazines of the period (such as *Wireless Weekly* which enthusiastically declared 1931 a "Radio Election") counselled politicians to "deliver their speeches in quieter tones" and a more

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[42] See P. Geeves, *The Dawn of Australia's Radio Broadcasting* (Sydney: Electronics Australia, 1983), p. 35; and A. Thomas, *Broadcast and Be Damned. The ABC's First Two Decades* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980), p. 92.

[43] Hughes, "Australia and New Zealand", p. 93.

[44] Thomas, *Broadcast and be Damned*, p. 83.

[45] G. Sawer, *Australian Federal Politics and Law 1929-1949* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1962), pp. 40-1.

[46] Hughes, "Australia and New Zealand", p. 93.

[47] Johnson, *Unseen Voice*, p. 192.

conversational manner.[48] By the mid-1930s reliance on broadcasting traditional campaign speeches was beginning to change. McNair suggests that by this time it had been learned that "the quiet atmosphere of the studio gave an altogether different tone of reasonableness and moderation to the speeches of candidates".[49]

Crisp records that John Curtin, who succeeded Scullin as federal ALP leader until 1935, was one federal politician who realised that there was a shift under way "from the small local meeting and other traditional media of approach to the people". A former journalist, Curtin believed that, though still in its infancy, political broadcasting "had come to stay" and that Labor needed to reorganise its finances for this more expensive form of political communication. Nonetheless, Crisp's own view appears to be that Labor was slow to adapt, and that it was not until the 1940s that the federal ALP began to make "extensive use of commercial radio time" and of advertising crafted by commercial advertising agencies.[50] This is consistent with the argument that Australian federal politicians were slow to appreciate the potential that radio held for new ways of wooing voters.

Yet the counter thesis that Australian politicians were quick to exploit radio has merit. Certainly this view had an early currency. We have already seen that the *Wireless Weekly* boasted that the 1931 federal election was the first radio election, that never before had "radio played such a big part in public affairs".[51] In 1926, just two years after broadcasting was officially established, the *Sydney Morning Herald* lamented that "No country in the world has been quicker to realise the vast possibilities of wireless broadcasting for propaganda purposes". In 1925 the *Daily Telegraph* carried a cartoon on "modern electioneering" which showed NSW ALP leader Jack Lang with a microphone in the act of broadcasting a policy speech.[52] On close inspection much of the evidence for the view that Australian politicians eagerly exploited radio comes from New South Wales and the Lang era. Here the third lesson from Canadian experience that radio was initially a local medium and first exploited by provincial politicians may have some relevance.

Radio and politics in NSW in the 1920s and 1930s.

Along with the 1949 John Henry Austral campaign, one part of the story of radio and politics in Australia which has been told concerns the founding of 2KY in Sydney and the role that radio broadcasting played in electioneering in NSW for a decade thereafter.[53] The story of 2KY illustrates the importance of local circumstances as well as the pervasive influence of north American practice. In the early 1920s E.R. Voigt was the foundation director of the NSW Trades and Labour

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[48] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

[49] McNair, *Radio Advertising in Australia*, p. 148.

[50] L.F. Crisp, *The Australian Federal Labour Party 1901-1951* (Sydney: Hale and Ironmonger, 1978), pp. 78 and 88.

[51] Johnson, *Unseen Voice*, p. 192.

[52] M. Goot, "Radio Lang" in H. Radi and P. Spearritt, eds., *Jack Lang* (Sydney: Hale and Ironmonger, 1977), pp. 121 and 123.

[53] See Goot, *ibid.*

Council's Research and Information Bureau[54] and a wireless enthusiast.[55] On a visit to the USA in 1923-24 he had been impressed by the political use to which Americans put radio. On his return to Sydney he "reported how effectively radio was being used in American political campaigns". At Voigt's urging in 1925 the NSW Labour Council formed a wireless committee and in due course applied for a B class licence even although many union secretaries had no time for such "new fangled nonsense". The end result was 2KY, "Australia's — and also the world's — first labor broadcasting station" which commenced broadcasting in October 1925.[56]

2KY originally intended to augment usual music programs with direct broadcasts which would give listeners access to discussions of the Trades Hall and other labour organisations. Johnson notes that 2KY "was broadcasting in time to be involved actively in the December 1925 federal elections and on 10 November the station announced that until the day of polling, its programs would consist solely of musical items interspersed with speeches from selected Labor candidates".[57] However 2KY did not become the propaganda voice for the labour movement that Voigt had envisaged. "One of the first body blows sustained by 2KY was an edict from the PMG's Department warning that transmission of messages to Labor Party branches would constitute a clear breach of official regulations".[58] Moreover, in its first year 2KY lost £20 per week[59] and it soon metamorphosed into a conventional commercial broadcaster.

By the 1930s 2KY "had become a popular entertainer, not a means of partisan education".[60] While it quickly drifted from the partisan course Voigt had charted for it, 2KY remained "always available, without charge, to state and federal Labor".[61] In subsequent state and federal elections 2KY served as a vehicle for election propaganda, most notably in the 1927 NSW campaign which Lang opened with a live broadcast from Auburn Town Hall (as he would do again in 1930 and 1932). In 1927 Lang's Nationalist opponents bought extensive time on 2GB and entered into a propaganda battle with 2KY which Lang himself later described as "the first time that [paid] broadcasting was used by both sides".[62] For five weeks, six days a week "2GB programmed [Nationalist] party propaganda morning, noon and night".[63] This 1927 NSW state election, MacKay writes echoing Lang in his autobiography, was the first fought in Australia in which "broadcasting was used by both political parties on a paid basis".[64]

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[54] Johnson says "secretary ... of the Sydney Labor Research Bureau", See *Unseen Voice*, p. 32.
[55] Goot, "Radio Lang", p. 121.
[56] Geeves, *The Dawn of Australia's Radio*, p. 39.
[57] Johnson, *Unseen Voice*, p. 35.
[58] Geeves, *The Dawn of Australia's Radio*, p. 40.
[59] I.M. MacKay, *Broadcasting in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957), p. 25.
[60] Johnson, *Unseen Voice*, p. 36.
[61] Goot, "Radio Lang", p. 134.
[62] Cited in Geeves, *Dawn of Australia's Radio*, p. 51.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 121.
[64] MacKay, *Broadcasting in Australia*, p. 25.

Much later Lang claimed to have seen that "the future of politics in Australia was going to be bound up with the future of broadcasting".[65] It is true, as Goot observes, that "Lang's first years as Labor leader coincided with the beginnings of radio as a social and political force".[66] And it seems clear that establishment by the NSW Trades and Labour Council (not the ALP from which Lang broke away in 1931) of its own radio station in 1925 stirred Lang's interest in using wireless as a vehicle for political propaganda. MacKay says of Lang that he was "quick to realise the advantages of a radio voice".[67] Such as it is, the evidence seems to suggest that Lang became increasingly sophisticated in his use of radio for propaganda purposes. Like other politicians of the era Lang first used radio to broadcast speeches, often speeches made before a town hall audience given in an oratorical style ill-suited to radio. However by the mid-1930s he had adopted a quite new tack. In 1934 Lang delivered a series of radio "chats" on the linked Sydney stations 2UW, 2GB, 2SM and 2UE as well as on 2KY and on six other regional NSW stations. The press advertisements which promoted the eighth of these described it as an "intimate broadcast" and showed a picture of Lang seated working at papers on his desk.[68]

What is remarkable about Lang's 1934 intimate "chats" with NSW listeners is that they came little more than a year after this form of political use of radio was perfected (if not pioneered) by the US president F.D. Roosevelt.[69] Whereas politicians had previously used radio to broadcast their speeches, Roosevelt conducted occasional intimate "fire-side chats" with American voters. He had a friendly, relaxed radio style and talked with rather than lectured to his listeners. His chats had "had an extraordinary impact".[70] Taras says of Roosevelt that he "soothed fears during the depression with his 'fireside chats' over radio: the secret of his success was to speak with great assurance on only a single topic in each broadcast so that his message would not be diluted".[71]

After Roosevelt went to air with the first of his chats his daily mail rose from around the 40 letters his predecessor Hoover had received, to some 4000.

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[65] Cited in Thomas, *Broadcast and be Damned*, pp. 11-12.

[66] Goot, "Radio Lang", p. 119.

[67] MacKay, *Broadcasting in Australia*, p. 25.

[68] See the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 September 1934, p. 14. Quite possibly McNair had Lang's radio chats in mind when he observed that "the quiet atmosphere of the studio gave an altogether new tone of reasonableness and moderation to the [broadcast] speeches of candidates and supporters". See McNair, *Radio Advertising*, p. 148.

[69] FDR is usually seen as the pioneer of this form of radio propaganda. However Delli Carpini suggests that before Roosevelt, the Republican Calvin Coolidge made effective use of radio in the 1924 presidential campaign (which E.R. Voigt had observed for the NSW TLC). He notes that one observer at the time reported that "Silent Cal's broadcasts went straight to the popular heart", and that Republican strategists "presciently" advised Coolidge not to use the language of the platform orator. See M. X. Delli Carpini, "Radio's Political Past", *Media Studies Journal*, No. 23 (1993): p. 26.

[70] J.S. Foote, *Television Access and Political Power* (Westport: Praeger, 1990), p. 12.

[71] D. Taras, *The Newsmakers* (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1990), p. 72.

Inevitably his successful use of radio attracted the attention of Canadian and Australian politicians and party officials. With the success of F.D.R.'s fire-side chats in mind, R.B. Bennett chose radio to unveil his scheme for economic recovery in an effort to revive his dying government. Beginning on 2 January 1935 he made a series of five New Deal speeches and personally contributed $10,000 to have them carried on 38 stations across Canada. Levine characterises these as "sensational" broadcasts (because of their content) and describes how, by the time the last was broadcast on 11 January, Canadians around the country were gathering around their own or their neighbour's radio sets holding "Bennett parties".[72] The fact that by this point in time Jack Lang in NSW had already experimented with the fire-side chat radio broadcast as a form of political communication suggests that at least he was at the cutting edge of the latest North American trends in electioneering.

2KY which served as a catalyst for Labor's and Lang's interest in radio as an electioneering tool was unique. In Melbourne the trades hall council eventually followed suit and launched 3KZ in 1930 but without the same missionary zeal with which 2KY was established. Although 3KZ carried some Labor broadcasts, from the beginning it was a more conventional broadcaster. In Queensland a state Labor government established an A-class station, 4QG, which commenced temporary broadcasting in July 1925 and a full service in April 1926. In founding 4QG (which was absorbed into the ABC in 1932) the government denied any intention to "create Labor propaganda stations: it wanted balance and a fair coverage not slanted to the advantage of any political party".[73] It was not simply the Labor side of politics which sought to set up radio stations. In 1925 the Nationalists evidently (unsuccessfully) sought a license for what became 2GB.[74] Walker notes that when the newly established Australian Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations first met in 1930 its catholic membership included two stations associated with trades and labour councils — presumably 2KY and 3KZ — as well as one operated by the Nationalist Party and yet others "affiliated with the newly-established Country Party".[75] Little has been written about this however, and perhaps the fact that these early and presumably local experiments in fashioning radio into a vehicle for party propaganda are little-known suggests that none succeeded.

Chifley, Menzies and the 1949 campaign

If the lesson of 2KY and Lang's use of radio in the 1930s is that Australians did see the political potential of the wireless and understand the ways radio had been turned to political communication in the US, the puzzle which remains is the apparent delay in John Henry Austral's 1949 arrival. It is clear that E.R. Voigt was keenly aware of the ways in which radio had been used in the 1924 US presidential

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[72] Levine, *Scrum Wars*, p. 171.

[73] Thomas, *Broadcast and be Damned*, p. 12.

[74] Goot, "Radio Lang", pp. 120-1.

[75] R.R. Walker, *The Magic Spark* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1973), p. 86.

campaign, and that in the mid-1930s Jack Lang was remarkably quick to exploit F.D.R.'s fire-side chat radio formula. Clearly there was, as Mills intimates, "an earlier [pre-second world war] era of American-derived innovation in the Australian political process".[76] Australian campaign strategists must also have known of the 1934 Californian gubernatorial campaign which spawned the Weary and Willie radio series, and perhaps even of its imitations used in Canadian provincial and federal elections in 1935. Although the 1949 John Henry Austral program is said to have broken new ground in political broadcasting by using imaginative dramatisation, the 1942 Gibson Committee noted growing use of dramatised broadcasting and McNair's 1937 account of commercial radio suggests that Rubensohn — whilst working for the ALP — first used the radio serial format for electioneering purposes during the NSW 1935 election.[77] It is less the novelty of dramatisation than the sheer scale of the John Henry Austral campaign which marks this 1949 campaign out as important.

Federal Australian politicians had made extensive use of radio from the mid-1930s onward. For example, between January 1935 and August 1936 Nationalist ministers made 70 broadcasts on the ABC and Labor front benchers another six.[78] Nevertheless, they appear often to have been quite tardy in seeing the potential that wireless held for new forms of political communication. In 1935 Curtin may have recognised that radio must change electioneering. But it is noteworthy that in 1947 the ALP federal executive thought it necessary to urge Curtin's successor as ALP leader, Chifley, to make more use of Labor-owned stations (such as 4KQ)[79] to publicise his government's policies and achievements, and that in the 1949 campaign (and at a time when the Liberals had fully grasped the significance of radio) Chifley elected not to use his full compliment of free air-time on the ABC. Moreover, Crisp argues that Chifley's regular Sunday evening broadcasts on commercial radio were "not very successful". Chifley had long resisted advice to give "regular or at least frequent 'fire-side' broadcasts", and when he finally agreed to do so, he approached broadcasting in an "offhand manner, unconvinced of its value". The resultant broadcasts were, Crisp says, "at best pedestrian, at worst downright dull ... and painfully impersonal".[80]

Tiffen has argued that the transforming impact of TV upon electioneering in Australia was marked by "some variations and reverses brought about by individual differences in competence amongst leaders and their staffs".[81] A similar argument might be made of the evolution of electioneering using radio broadcasting in Australia. In NSW in the mid-1930s Jack Lang soon learned that

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[76] *New Machine Men*, p. 2.

[77] See McNair, *Radio Advertising*, p. 148.

[78] T. Bottoms "Radio Oz, Part 2" [audio tape], (National Program Service Cassettes, nd).

[79] The Queensland ALP obtained a license for 4KQ in 1947 and eventually sold it in 1986. During this period it operated as a commercial station and not an outlet for Labor propaganda.

[80] Crisp, *Australian Federal Labour*, p. 94. Also see L.F. Crisp, *Ben Chifley: A Biography* (Adelaide: Griffin Press, 1961), p. 243.

[81] R. Tiffen, *News and Power* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), p. 139.

radio was an intimate medium. Yet other politicians continued to broadcast old-style policy speeches (for instance, as Archibald Price did on 5AD in his 1941 campaign to win Boothby).[82] The importance of the individual preferences and capabilities of party leaders is sharply drawn in the 1949 election campaign. Chifley, who lead Labor into this campaign, was a "disappointing failure" who was simply unwilling to adapt his "lack-lustre style and flat, gravelly voice" to radio broadcasting.[83] In marked contrast his opponent in 1949, Menzies, well understood the needs of radio. Despite professing a distaste for amplification by microphone, Menzies saw broadcasting as a "great modern weapon". From January 1942 through to April 1944 Menzies had made 105 weekly radio broadcasts on 3AW, 2UE and associated regional stations to rebuild his political career following his humiliating resignation as prime minister.[84]

In 1949 Menzies grasped the importance of radio as Chifley did not. Lloyd records that Menzies, recognising that his party had failed to use radio effectively in the previous 1946 federal campaign, thereafter "travelled extensively in the United States and United Kingdom, studying developments in news media" and observing first-hand the 1948 US presidential campaign. As a result "he dismissed as worthless" the previous election practice to have "some 'poop' read a stilted script in an affected voice" and urged his party to make better, more extensive use of radio.[85] Menzies was a fine orator. His "unmistakably Australian voice", well-modulated "with its full vowels and clearly enunciated consonants", was suited to political broadcasting.[86] On the hustings in 1949 he "combined public meetings and radio into a public communications model without peer in Australian political history".[87] No doubt having a party leader in Menzies who grasped the importance of radio encouraged the Liberal party organisation to invest in broadcasting as heavily as it did with the John Henry Austral series.

Conclusion

The advent of the wireless had a much less dramatic and less well-defined impact upon the planning and execution of election campaigns than television was later to have. Radio evolved slowly and politicians were often slow to see its potential. Nonetheless, the arrival of radio did transform political communication in Australia as it did elsewhere. As Nolan points out with Canada in mind — Canadian scholars have made a much better fist of exploring the evolution of electioneering practices — the use of radio "altered the relationship of politician to

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[82] C. Kerr, *Archie. The Biography of Sir Archibald Grenfell Price* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1983), p. 166.

[83] Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p. 243.

[84] J. Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1992), p. 15.

[85] C.J. Lloyd, "The Media" in S. Prasser, J.R. Nethercote and J. Warhurst (eds), *The Menzies Era* (Sydney: Hale and Ironmonger, 1995) p. 123. Also see C. Hazlehurst, *Menzies Observed* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1979), pp. 301ff.

[86] Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, p. 15.

[87] Lloyd, "The Media", p. 120.

voter".[88] Brett says radio "got politics off the streets and into the kitchens and respectable loungerooms of the [Australian] nation".[89] The wireless seems also to have begun the erosion of face-to-face political activity. As Crisp claims that John Curtin understood in 1935, the coming of radio both diminished the importance of small local meetings and placed a "premium upon the superficial but more expensive forms of propaganda".[90] Overacker provides some evidence for this. In the late 1940s she recorded that the party managers and journalists to whom she talked all agreed that the attendance at local party meetings had fallen off with the advent of radio.[91]

We have seen that Menzies successfully combined public meetings with radio. Certainly the application of radio to electioneering did not displace traditional forms of campaigning. But it did admit a quite new approach to politics which involved applying commercial marketing practices and the "selling" of politicians and parties. Radio opened the door to professional advertising agencies and allowed them to begin to claim control over the design and implementation of election campaigns — a trend also subsequently attenuated by the arrival of television. Mr Sage and John Henry Austral were each the invention of an advertising agency. But so too was F.D.R.'s "fireside chat" radio talk format.[92] As Levine argues, "large American advertisers were the first to comprehend radio's real power",[93] and they then taught politicians that radio could be also used to "sell politicians and policies" and to win elections. In Australia (as in Canada) there is a long history of political parties hiring advertising agencies to assist with election campaigns. Hansen-Rubensohn evidently first worked with the ALP in NSW as early as 1928.[94] In Canada's case "scattered evidence" suggests parties used agencies even in the 1920s.[95] Initially agencies were used only for technical tasks such as laying out copy or booking and placing advertising. Advertising professionals now have a much more pivotal role. It is generally agreed that with the advent of television "the advertising expert evolved from being a technician to being a central adviser and strategist".[96] In fact this intrusion of commercial

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[88] M. Nolan, "Political Communication Methods in Canadian Federal Election Campaigns 1867-1925", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol.7 (4) (1981), p. 38.

[89] *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, p. 18.

[90] Crisp, *Australian Federal Labour*, p. 88.

[91] See Hughes, "Australia and New Zealand", p. 93.

[92] Nolan points out that as early as 1924 FDR was advised by the advertising specialist Bruce Barton that "...radio has made possible an entirely new type of campaign" in which candidates might informally chat to people in their homes rather than address them. See Nolan, "Political Communication Methods", p. 38.

[93] Levine, *Scrum Wars*, p. 169.

[94] A. Kaldor, "Liberal and Labor Press Advertising", *Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 40 (2), p. 47. Note that Mills suggests that Rubensohn did not actually start working for Labor until the 1930s. See Mills, *New Machine Men*, p. 89.

[95] R. Whitaker, *The Government Party: Organising and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada 1930-58* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

[96] R.K. Carty, "Three Canadian Party Systems" in his *Canadian Political Party Systems*, p. 581. Carty clearly has Canada in mind but the same argument can be made about Australian practice.

advertising into the heart of the campaign process is one part of the wider argument that there has been an Americanisation of campaigning. While television may have hastened this process, it is clear that the advent of radio as a vehicle for campaign propaganda first drew advertising agencies into the creative design of campaign messages. Mr Sage was devised by J.J. Gibbons and John Henry Austral by Hansen-Rubensohn. In both instances advertising specialists scripted the political messages which voters heard.

There are clearly large gaps in our understanding of the early political use of radio in Australia. But what we do know suggests that Mills is right to argue that "Australia's oldest political tradition is borrowing and adaptation".[97] Even in the 1920s — and certainly in the 1930s and 1940s — Australian politicians and parties borrowed and adapted ways of using the wireless as a means of political communication from North America (just as the commercial radio industry borrowed and adapted programming and advertising ideas which had proven successful in the US market). It is true that this borrowing was much more halting and haphazard than it now is in an era when both major Australian parties routinely send officials to participate in and learn from US campaigns, and even import and employ American political consultants. In the 1930s and 1940s Australian parties scarcely had a national organisation and radio itself never achieved the central importance to election campaigning that television was to have. Perhaps as a consequence, the borrowing and adaptation which evidently occurred owed much more to the initiative of individuals such as E.R.Voigt, Lang, Rubensohn or even Menzies.

Contemporary election campaigns fought by the major Australian parties now harness not only the talents of advertising professionals, but of pollsters, "spin doctors" and other communication professionals all employed to shape and deliver the campaign message. The methods of political communication used to win and woo voters owe a great deal to commercial marketing on the one hand, and on the other, clearly echo electioneering techniques used in countries such as Canada and, of course, the USA. Arguably one consequence of this is that Australian election campaigns have acquired an increasingly "American" character. Television may well lie at the heart of this process. The need for communication specialists arises because we live in a time when the "skillful use of television to cultivate ... political support is regarded as essential to political success in every [modern] democracy".[98] But the borrowing and adapting of commercial and American campaign practices clearly pre-dates the arrival of television in 1956. In Australia this borrowing began when radio was the only available broadcast medium. The "Americanisation" of electioneering has a history in the early use of radio for political communication which is often neglected, but which may contribute to our understanding of the professionalisation of campaigning.

See Mills, *New Machine Men*.

[97] Mills, *New Machine Men*, p. 11.

[98] Mancini and Swanson, "Politics, Media, and Modern Democracy", p. 11.